



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE  
FOUNDATION

27<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council  
Geneva (Switzerland)  
8 September 2014

Item 2

Interactive dialogue with Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights House Foundation statement

*Check against delivery*

Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

Mr High Commissioner,

**The Human Rights House Foundation would like to warmly welcome you as new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. At this occasion we would like to address a few challenges ahead in your mandate:**

- 1. Firstly, the High Commissioner is a critical voice to hold human rights above political interests. We expect you Mr High Commissioner to always be principled and vocal, avoid double-standards, and hold powerful States as accountable for human rights violations as those you might identify as friendly ones;**
- 2. Secondly, we see a worrisome trend in the Office of the High Commissioner to neglect human rights violations in Europe. More attention needs to be paid at the highest level of your Office to restrictions to fundamental rights especially in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The authorities of Azerbaijan are indeed leading an unprecedented crackdown against civil society by arresting, one after the other, key critics of the country's leadership, and to date your Office has stayed silent;<sup>1</sup>**
- 3. We strongly welcome though the work done by your Office since April in Ukraine. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission has proven that the United Nations action is complementary to other international organisations, in this case especially the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Mission has continuously put human rights at the centre of the attention, verified information and shed light on**

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<sup>1</sup> HRHF press release of 9 August 2014, "Unprecedented repression in Azerbaijan: key civil society leaders imprisoned", available at <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/20335.html>.

**actions by those who hold weapons in the country. We welcome that the Mission has been clear in documenting violence by armed troupes supported by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. We believe there is more to be done to ensure accountability for the killings, which took place in Kyiv during EuroMaidan. We have requested that the Ukrainian government extend the mandate of the International Criminal Court investigations (taking into account events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine) and ratify the Rome Statute. As reported by the Mission<sup>2</sup> the so-called anti-terrorism laws adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament in August 2014 are in violation with international law. We hence call upon you, Mr High Commissioner, to clearly state to the Ukrainian authorities that they will not secure Ukraine if they do not secure fundamental rights and accountability for human rights violations, including by an ICC investigation;**

- 4. Fourthly, we believe that the Office of the High Commissioner needs to seriously review the tasks, mandates and priorities of its field presence. It should be key support to human rights defenders and on their side to protect them – our experience is too often the opposite.**

**On behalf of the 90 NGOs of the Human Rights House Network, we look forward addressing these challenges with you, Mr High Commissioner. We finally wish to ensure you of our full support to reinforce your Office, including by extending its ordinary budget.**

**Thank you.**

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<sup>2</sup> Report of 17 August 2014, paragraph 112, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14975&LangID=E>.